

Russia itself is an  
ossetian cemetery  
and



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Russia and the former Soviet Union has incredible mountains, beaches, deserts, ethnic villages, spectacular volcanoes and glaciers, making it one of the most beautiful countries in the world. However, due to inconsistent advertising and lack of invested budget in the development of these places, Russia's natural beauty is frequently overlooked even by Russians. This guide presents ten stunning travel destinations for travel addicts and lovers of active holidays to take a look at while in Russia. Dargavs, the City of the Dead This very interesting place is located in North Ossetia, and hidden in one of the five mountain ridges.

There are many myths about this place, and one being that no one ever comes back when they visit this location. It is very isolated, so we are thinking this may be the reason why this ancient grave site doesn't get many tourists. The road to this place is not an easy one, it takes about three hours and consists of narrow windy roads and lots of on foot trekking. The city itself is an Ossetian cemetery and each family had a crypt to bury their loved ones.

The weather that shrouds these mountain ridges also gives the whole place a very ungodly feel. The oldest of these crypts date back to the 16th century. This isn't a very popular archeological site, but previous findings puzzled everyone for some time now. For instance, the bodies inside of crypts are buried inside of wooden structures which resemble boats - so the mystery remains, why bother creating boats with no rivers in sight? Another interesting fact, is that there is a small well in front of each of the crypts. Ossetians would do this by dropping a coin into it, and if it hit a rock that

meant that the soul has reached heaven. This place will remain a very secluded, and eerie place.

Definitely an interesting location on our planet many won't see." The city of the dead", Dargavs is the most mystery village of Russia due to a number of cemeteries and crypts that stretch all over the Caucasus mountain slopes.

Unique style of cryptsThe crypts are white, rock-made and built in organized position. At the end of the cemetery lies a tower of which the top has been ruined. The local people have a myth that the one who look after the souls was buried in this tower. The crypts were all built in the ancient Nakh style.

They are pyramid-roofed huts and there are ones for families, soldiers, martyrs,... This architectural style dates back to 2000 years ago and varies in sizes and shapes. The walls are flat and the whole buildings look like cubes. The dead were buried in these little houses with their own clothes, accessories. This is the place where they rest in peace. Some of the crypts have bedrooms, some even have multi-floors depending on the number of the family members. Besides, people who have no family or come from the faraway land were also buried here.

The legend of the wood boatsThe coffin of the dead looks like boats. It is told that the dead have to cross a river in order to reach the heaven, similar to the story on the afterlife of ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamia. There is a well inside every single crypt.

When the dead were buried, they dropped a coin into the well. If the coin happened to touch the rock in the well, then it was believed that the dead had reached the heaven. The historians believe that the cemetery was built

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when the big plague wiped out the whole land of Ossetia in the middle of 16th and 18th centuries. Thousands of people passed away, the population dropped from 200, 000 to only 16, 000 in the half of 19th century. Just outside the Russian town of Dargavs in North Ossetia lies a mysterious necropolis fittingly named The City of the Dead. This ancient grave yard consists of 99 ancient crypts ranging in size from just big enough house a body, to 4 story mega crypts. The exact date of their construction has been lost to time.

Sources vary in their estimates ranging from 1100AD to 1500AD. Most have settled somewhere in the middle with a rough estimate of around 1300AD. Dargavs- mysterious city of the dead, not many dares to travel there.

The ones who does not always returns. Some larger crypts have 2 or even 4 floors, has lower levels of the sides or in total without roofs. Larger crypts are pyramid shaped, cross-vault edges to hold the roof. Smaller crypts have half-cylinder-shaped arches. Pyramid and cone-shaped roof looks as if the steps. The walls are built of stone blocks and reinforced with lime and clay mortar. The walls are carved square openings for windows, through which the dead bodies were loaded. Valley residents loved ones were buried in crypts with clothes and other necessary items.

Each family had a crypt: the higher it is, the more it is a member. In some crypts were underground chambers or several floors, depending on the number of times there is buried. Dead city is also a crypt for single people, as well as those who have lived separated from the city. Dargavs rich in monuments remaining from the Bronze Age and late Middle Ages.

Archaeologists here looking for and finding a lot of valuable information, as hundreds of years ago lived in Ossetia, local people. Nowadays, this mysterious historical site abandonment. Tourists rarely visit. Perhaps because of the historic area is very difficult to travel .

.. In fact, by itself, the “ City of the Dead” is not located directly in Dargavs, it is located one kilometer from the village, on the Raminyrag hillside. In fact, except for the crypts of the deceased, it is not inhabited by anyone else, only by the guard who takes care of the historical monument. The “ City of the Dead” is visible from a distance, thanks to the fact that it is next to a mountain swept by the wind.

The travelers have a good image: the green slope, studded with a variety of houses of crypt of stone plastered with light covered with black tiles, which appears on the bottom of the mountain with a massive number. From this image, whether you like it or not, thoughts of the eternal come to mind, which helps especially the wind blowing here. It is in these houses, tombs, that according to the ancient tradition, the Osetios buried their dead until the 18th century, when these lands became part of the Russian Empire. Altai MountainsThe name “ Altay” (or “ Altai”) comes from Mongolian “ Altan”, which means “ golden”.

Altay mountains are truly one of the nature’s most marvelous gems, amazing by its diversity and beauty. The Altay ecoregion covers vast 845, 000 square kilometer area at the junction of four countries: Russia (largest part), Kazakhstan, Mongolia and China. Novosibirsk, the city through which the Trans-Siberian route goes, is about 600 km far, which is very not far for

Siberian scales. Altay is a land where myths and legends are incarnated into reality. It's one of those rare corners on the Earth where Nature decided to show everything it was capable of. Broad and boundless views of steppes, luxuriant varieties of taiga thickets, modest charm of deserts, severe splendor of snowy peaks, laconic beauty of tundra – the diversity of landscapes here is so rich, it is as if you are turning over pages of a geographical atlas! Three major factors make Altay mountains a recreational domain of great value: amazing natural diversity (various landscapes, climates, abundance of wildlife); thin population, historically nomadic (Mongolian and Kazakh ethnoses), who have a very natural way of life; and remoteness from any industries (the region lives only for tourism and agriculture). All this has ensured that Altay region stayed untouched by industrial development and is still a very natural place. Besides, such diversity makes it possible to involve in almost any possible activity: from rafting to trekking, from speleo to skiing.

Stretching for nearly 2000 km from north-west to south-east, Altai mountains form a natural border between the arid steppes of Mongolia and the rich taiga of Southern Siberia. Both climatic zones create the landscapes of striking diversity, ranging from the Mongolia-like steppes (at the area of Kosh-Agach village, south east) to those of the Swiss Alps (along Chuysky Trakt). During the Soviet times, Altay was a mecca for adventure tourism, especially rafting. Altai mountains have a lot of rivers, Katun, Biya, and Chuya being the longest of them. There are also myriads of smaller mountain rivers that are fed by Altay's glaciers. Along all these rivers there's

a lot of places for recreation and fishing. You can easily put a tent anywhere you want.

The Altai Mountains: a unique opportunity for the physically fit, adventurous and culturally curious  
The Altai Mountains offer a unique opportunity for the physically fit, adventurous, culturally curious, and lovers of unspoiled natural beauty to enjoy the experience of venturing into the lands where, for thousands of years, a handful of people have lived in close harmony with nature, herding their livestock, untouched by the modern world. They extend both warmth and hospitality which makes the foreign traveler feel welcome. The Altai Mountain Range is located in one of the most beautiful, pristine and remote parts of the world, stretching across the very center of Central Asia between China, Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Russia, and standing at the junction of several natural zones and cultures. Few foreigners ever venture to this corner of the world.

Those that do, see a variety of stunning high mountain landscapes and immense open spaces, all framed by snow covered peaks. It's all here: alpine peaks, narrow river canyons and broad valleys, highland tundra, deep limestone gorges, open steppes, permanent snow and glaciers  
The mountains are divided by several river valleys. There is a great variety of landscapes. There are hollows with semi-desert landscapes, Alpine peaks, narrow river canyons and broad valleys, highland tundra, and deep limestone gorges, open steppes, permanent snow and glaciers and tracts of forest, as well as lakes, wild rivers, and waterfalls. The mountains rise from 350 to 4500 meters.

Many rare and threatened animals, and plants live in the region with at least 73 mammal species including the elusive snow leopard, the Altai ibex and the argali (a mountain sheep with large ram horns), lynx, wolf and bear. The Altai also harbors a rich bird life of over 300 species including the black eared kite, tawny and imperial eagle, saker falcon and demoiselle crane. In addition, a multitude of bird species use the Altai lakes as resting points on their semi-annual migration between India and Northern Europe.

Native fish include the grayling and the lenok. Altai is an inimitable in its beauty, full of charm and mysteries land located on the crossing of borderlines of four states, they are Russia, Kazakhstan, China and Mongolia. It's home for the largest in the world Western-Siberian plain and the Altai Mountain Range. In Turkish language Altai means " golden mountains".

In its name are closely interwoven the legends about countless treasures of nomads' tribes and mineral generosity with spirituality and primordial beauty of the mountain land. The Altai Mountains are the highest mountain range in Siberia, the highest point of Altai and Siberia in general is the mount Belukha (4506 m). The mountains are of mainly volcanic origin. In the Mesozoic era the Altai Mountains were gradually destroyed by the action of the sun, wind and other natural forces. Over millions of years, the former mountain country became into a plain with raised areas. In the Altai Mountains there are many intra-basins of different height with cold mountain lakes. Altai is often called " Russian Tibet" or " Siberian Alps".

The nature of Altai is absolutely unique, rich in biodiversity of flora and fauna. It is exactly that place, where the driest place in Russia is located, it's



called Chuya steppe. You can even see camels there! The steppe strikes tourists' imagination with its severity, but at the same time attracts people by a great number of archeological monuments – burial mounds, stone statues and rock paintings. Moreover, Altai is rich for rivers and lakes. In plains and in the mountains there are more than 18 000 lakes and 37 000 rivers! Among them is the Katun River famous for its rapids and Teletskoye Lake – one of the deepest in the world with “ stone bay” not far from it, which appeared as a result of falling meteorite. Aya Lake is also widely known in the region, as tourists have a possibility to swim in summer in this mountain lake.

Altai is also a region of beautiful mountains, glaciers and waterfalls. You can find there the highest waterfall in Russia called Chulchinsky cascade. It's interesting that the area of Altai is covered with 1400 glaciers. The greater part is concentrated near Belukha Mountain (4506 m). Altai is not accidentally named the “ land of mountains”.

It's indeed the highest region in Siberia. Many mountain ranges rise up to the sky at a height 3000-4000 m above the sea-level. The highest is the Katun mountain range. Generally speaking, the mountains of Altai are unusually beautiful and diverse, take Red gates on Ulagan road alone. Altai is a genuine crossing of civilizations, every of which has left its rich heritage. Here we can speak about different archeological sites (Gorno-Altaysk and Denisov cave), petroglyphs and stone sculptures, Scythian burial mounds and the most mysterious place in Altai, the Plateau Ukok, which discovered the mummy called “ princess of Altai” to the world.

The opportunities for traveling around Altai are indeed boundless. In the Republic and in the Region all possibilities for organized and individual tourism are created. You can not only ascend the peaks, raft along the river, but also meet a shaman, live in a yurt or to get married in a solitary temple in Patmos Island. About 4000 kg of authentic Altai Mountain honey is produced annually, and celebrated during the honey festivals of Gorno-Altajsk and Barnaul, where it can be bought directly from producers.